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ABSTRACT

Taking the form of a fable, this paper presents a discussion of the English language from the point of view of someone totally unknowing of its requirements. In the paper, an increasingly large cast of personified parts of speech make repeated visits to the "G. and P. (Good and Proper) Grammar Store." Sections of the paper discuss: nouns and verbs (In the Beginning); adjectives and adverbs (The Nouns and Verbs Go Shopping); prepositions (Prepositions!); verbals, cases, and tenses (Some Cousins Move In); grammar (Mr. Usage Lays Down the Law); pronouns (The Versatile Substitutes); and clauses and sentences (Clauses and All That...). (RS)

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The English Story

by

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Think of this as a first encounter with language,
in this case English,
by someone totally unknowing its requirements.

In the Beginning . . . .

Once upon a time there was a little Noun who was soon joined by another little Noun, then another and another and another . . . . Eventually, there was quite a large family of them. And before long, they had been joined by a few members of the Verb family who also constantly grew and grew in numbers. These two families went everywhere together. Occasionally, they did not hit it off with one another and things did not run smoothly but most of the time, all the members of both families lived peacefully side by side.

One day some of the Nouns and some of the Verbs began to discuss their relationship.

"We are undoubtedly meant to be the rulers," said one of the ambitious little Nouns.

"But you can't get anywhere or do anything without us," asserted a far-seeing Verb.

Both families understood the situation perfectly so they made a pact: Both families were recognized as of equal importance. A committee was then appointed to work out the consequences of some of the lesser details of their arrangement

upon the other words, for by that time the Nouns and the Verbs had been joined by a great number of other stray words, and the Nouns and the Verbs realized it was up to them to decide the apportionment of their world. Of course, they did not ignore Dr. Grammarian; they agreed to go to him with any problems they could not solve themselves.

Surveying their own family one day, the Nouns discovered they had grown into quite a large group, so large that they had almost unconsciously divided themselves into different branches. The largest and most competent Nouns, of course, were the Common Nouns, but some of them had grown to feel themselves more important, to the point that they called themselves Proper Nouns, and were really rather haughty and autocratic; they even had rules they followed concerning <u>where</u> they were willing to work. Then there were the Collective Nouns, who sometimes seemed rather wishy washy and changeable. Sometimes they said they were Singular and sometimes they said they were Plural and sometimes they insisted they could be either one! They caused trouble for a lot of people. (The Verbs had a terrible time getting along with them, and they befuddled a number of other words as well.) When all the Nouns gathered together, they sometimes divided themselves into other kinds of groupings, too. The main group was that of the Concrete Nouns, who claimed to be the First Nouns as well as the most practical and essential in the family. Then others, with a somewhat lofty attitude, bragged about being Abstract Nouns. Without us, they boasted, there could be no

ideals or beliefs, no qualities, none of the finer things in life such as truth, courage, honor, aspirations . . . . The Abstracts were really very talky, sometimes downright preachy and boring, felt some of the others, even when they had to admit somewhat shamefacedly, the Abstracts were necessary, too.

The Verbs, on the other hand, did not have as many branches. They were all, numerous as they were, sprung from two family divisions, the Transitives and the Intransitives --- but these two divisions were radically different from one another. Very rarely was a single Verb able to hold his own in both camps.

The Intransitives claimed to be the simplest and the easiest to understand. "They are only two kinds of <u>us</u>," they told everyone, "the Complete Verbs, who need <u>nothing</u> to help them do their work, and the Linking Verbs, who need only Subjective Complements." (That s spelled with an <u>e</u>, they cautioned). When asked what they did with Complements, they replied instantly, "We link them to the ruling Noun (Subject) which they rename or modify." (It was clear that the Linking Verbs had no doubts about <u>their</u> function in life!)

The Transitives, in turn, thought they were the simplest. "There is only one kind of us," they explained, "and we can do more, too. We, and only we, have <u>Voice</u> so we can be either Active or Passive. When we are Active, we can take Objects!"

"Objects," the others in the family jeered, "and what do you do with <u>them</u>? What kinds of them <u>are</u> there?"

"Why, we have to have Direct Objects, to show what we can do, and we can take Indirect Objects also, to show who we're doing things for, and a few of us can even take Objective Complements." (The Verb was secretly glad he did not have to explain Objective Complements or, in fact, any of the Objectives; he was not too sure about them himself yet.)

"Also, we alone have the Passive Voice," they pontificated. "We can begin sentences with the Direct Object and show what the Verb can do with it. That gives us the chance to have more variety in sentence structure than anybody else!"

"Humph," sniffed one of the Intransitives. "There are other ways to have variety in sentence structure. Why there's --- there's --- there's . . . . " he broke off weakly. The rest hardly noticed his confusion as they were off again arguing endlessly about which branch of the family was the most valuable. The Verbs were always arguing, or exclaiming, or shouting, it seemed. The more peaceful members of the family were so quiet, they seldom could make themselves heard over all the din, but someway they were always around, easy to find, when they were needed. Above all, the Verbs always stuck together, defending their territory whenever they were attacked.

The Nouns and Verbs Go Shopping

One day the Nouns were sitting around, feeling a little down and gloomy, when one of them had a thought.

"I wish we had something new to dress us up," she said wistfully. "We keep looking the same and feeling the same everywhere we go."

They all moped around awhile longer then someone had a bright idea.

"Let's go down to the big Grammar Supply Store they are just opening," he said. "Maybe we can find something new there." The whole group gathered up a convenient Verb and rushed away.

The G. and P. Store, the Grammar Superstore, was brightly lit and very easy to see in the distance. When they got closer, they found that there were many colorful floors. Inside, there were several salesmen waiting to serve them; each was wearing a big name tag showing his name and/or department. Finding what would interest them wouldn't be hard with so much help!

The name tag on the nearest salesman said "Mr. Thesaurus" so they told him their troubles. He listened carefully then shook his head.

"You could use my department later," he said, "but, first, I think you should go up to the Second Floor where we sell our Modifiers. There is one particular section where I believe you could find just what you need!"

When they arrived on Second, the whole group let out a collective "Oh-h-h," for there in every direction were words in

groups and singly, in every color, size, and shape. They were enchanted, almost unable to move in the midst of such luxury! A short, fat, little man bustled up to help them. His name tag read "Mr. Modifier--Adjectives."

"We've been expecting you," he beamed.

He seemed to know exactly what they needed and led the Nouns, open-mouthed, over to a special section to their right. "Now, here," he explained, "are the Adjectives. They were designed just to serve you! With their help, you can be and look any way you choose!"

The Nouns went crazy, going up and down the aisles, cramming words into their shopping bags as fast as they could. When they had almost all they could carry, they started down the Escalator.

"Wait," said Mr. Modifier hurrying after them, "you are forgetting the most necessary ones." He handed the leader a small bag.

"These are the Articles," he explained, "*the*, *a*, and *an*. You can reuse them over and over. They may not be as beautiful as the others, but when you use them, everyone will know you are Nouns."

The Nouns were ecstatic over their accessories, but as they hurried back, they were faced with a new problem. Where would they store their new finds until they were needed? One of them finally came up with the perfect solution -- a closet. They would build on a big closet in which they could store Adjectives.

After the shopping trip the Nouns had a wonderful time,

exchanging Adjectives with one another, and trying them on before and behind them, in groups and singly. When some of the Verbs dropped in for a visit, the Linking Verbs started to jump up and down.

"We can use these new Adjectives, too. You can lend them to us to use as Complements and they can modify you from a new place. We can call them Predicate Adjectives!" As a part of the agreement between the Nouns and Verbs, they had decided to divide the world in which they lived --- the Sentence --- into 2 parts. The Nouns could go anywhere in the Sentence, but they would rule only in one part, called the Subject while the Verbs would rule the other part, called the Predicate.

Much later on, when the Verbs learned more about themselves and their cousins, the Verbals, that only produced more arguments and disagreements among them. It always seemed to the Verbs that others were trying to infringe upon their rights and duties. The better they got to know the Verbals, the more they felt that way about them. Although they usually tried to hide it, some of the Verbs were frequently jealous.

One day soon after the Nouns' trip when the Verbs had been moaning and groaning about the dullness of their lives, a small voice suddenly spoke up.

"Hey, you know what we need? The Nouns now have Adjectives which they use to decorate themselves in all sorts of ways. Why can't we get some Adjectives for ourselves?"

His friends spoke up at once. "Shoot, yes!" (The Verbs gave themselves jobs at every opportunity.) "We need some decoration, too!"

So the group of Verbs set out for the G. and P. Grammar Store. It did not take them as long to reach the bright, shining edifice because, after all, they were the Verbs, and they could move with the speed of light! The first person they encountered was so well-dressed, they know immediately he was one of the managers and could direct them to the proper floor. Besides they noticed his name-tag said "Mr. Index," and that gave them even more confidence.

Mr. Index directed them, as the Nouns had been, to go to the Second Floor.

"Someone will meet you there," he said, speaking very precisely, "and show you exactly what you want."

At the top of the Escalator, they were met by a tall, thin man with a somewhat sober face. His name tag read, "Mr. Modifier --- Adverbs."

"You must be the Verbs," he said to the pushing, jostling shopping party. "We have exactly what you need first," and he led them over to the left side of the room where a large section was blocked off by a sign above the counters, reading "Adverbs."

The usually loud Verbs were almost struck dumb by the number and variety of Adverbs piled up before them, but that did not last long! Soon most of them were pushing and shoving up and down the aisles, each trying to fill his shopping cart first.

"Just a moment," the tall, thin man interrupted them, "you need to know that these Adverbs are not yours exclusively. Their main job is to modify Verbs, but they were made to modify Adjectives also, as well as each other." He smiled quietly, which seemed to light up his sober face. "You see, you are buying the most versatile of the modifiers. You will find you can move them around anywhere in the Sentence. No other word is so moveable."

"Even in the Subject?" asked one irrepressible little Verb.

"Well," the salesman temporized, "perhaps not in the subject very often but certainly right by it --- if you use a comma, that is." The Verbs had not yet learned about Commas, but they were too enthusiastic about the Adverbs to worry about anything else now.

As they were starting back with their heaping packages, they too, like the Nouns, began to wonder where to store their new posssessions. Their abode was already crowded with new Verbs constantly moving in. It was not long before the Verbs came to the same conclusion the Nouns had reached; they also needed a closet.

"We'd better build it right beside the Nouns' closet," one far-thinking Verb cautioned. "You remember that Mr. Modifier told us that the Adjectives had the right to borrow them, too." The other Verbs grumpily agreed, and so it was done.

Prepositions!

Things went along very smoothly for the Nouns and Verbs, and the Adjectives and Adverbs, for quite some time until one very dreary, boring November day the Nouns and Verbs were sitting about complaining about sameness of their lives.

"Why don't we all go back to the G. and P.?" piped up one little Verb. "They had what made us feel better before!"

And so, the whole group of Nouns and Verbs set out, pushing and jostling as usual when their progress was not regimented in an orderly fashion. In due time they arrived at the G. and P. Grammar Store. This time they were greeted by a sweet-faced, little lady who wore a gray silk dress and a tag which read "Miss Order."

"How can I help you?" she asked kindly. When they all began to talk at once, telling her their lives were dull and boring and filled with sameness, Miss Order smiled sweetly and motioned them into a double line heading toward the escalator.

"Go up to the Third Floor," she said, "and look over our baskets of Prepositions. You'll find you can do a LOT with them."

The Nouns and Verbs were so excited, they were almost to the Third Floor before it occured to them that they did not even know what Prepositions were or what they looked like --- let alone what to do with them.

The Third Floor really seemed peculiar for a store. It was filled with baskets and hampers of all different heights. As

they looked down into them, the families found heaping piles of little words: *in*, *on*, *out*, *about*, *above*, *behind*, *below*, *beneath*, *behind* --- the list seemed to go on and on. The group picked up some of the little words and stared at each other in a puzzled way. 'What do we do with these?' their expressions seemed to say. Just then seeing their confusion, a happy, bouncing young man hurried up to them and asked breathlessly, "Can I help you?"

The young man, whose name-tag read "Mr. Case," suddenly had more questions to answer than he could sort out. When he could finally make himself heard, he began to explain to the worried, anxious customers:

"These baskets all hold Prepositions, which are joiners; that is all they do, join! But, Ladies and Gentlemen, they can only function if you Nouns give them the thing they have to have, Objects."

The Nouns looked at one another in amazement. What were these Objects? Mr. Case proceeded to explain.

"You, Nouns, are accustomed to being the rulers in the Sentence --- and you do it very well," he smiled ingratiatingly, "but there is something else you can do. Let me tell you about my family and what we do, because this will open many new opportunities for you to make more elaborate Sentences."

Mr. Case then proceeded to tell them about the three branches of the Case family, the Nominatives, the Possessives, and the Objectives. He explained that his family did not deal with Verbs.

"When you are running the Sentence," he told the Nouns, "you are really in the Nominative Case; you are the boss. However, if you can put on a different hat, so to speak, and act as Objects, you are in the Objective Case. Oh, yes, you can take your Adjectives and their Adverbs with you when you act as Objects also," he added.

In answer to a plaintive question, Mr. Case laughed.

"Why should you act as Objects? Well, when you add a Preposition, you become a Prepositional Phrase. This means the whole group of you act together, never separately, to modify Nouns, Verbs --- or Adjectives and Adverbs. With these phrases, you can give information and details that you cannot give as well in just Subject and Verb combinations. In short, you will gain a new type of modifier with very little effort. It will give you more power. Why don't you try some of them?" A Noun whose name was *Dish* reached into a basket and gingerly picked up an "*of*," thought carefully then grabbed a nearby Noun whose name was "*Apples*" and soon all the other Nouns, and the Verbs as well, circulated among the hampers picking various Prepositions and coupling them with nearby Nouns. They were delighted with their success.

"I wish we'd brought our Adjectives, especially the Articles, and the Adverbs with us," said one.

"Let's buy a lot of Prepositions and take them back home," said another. "Then we can combine them in all sorts of new ways!"

"Is there any limit upon how many words we can use in the Prepositional Phrases?" a very practical Verb asked Mr. Case. "No, there is no law about the number," Mr. Case replied seriously, "but you will find that most of the time just two or three seem to work best. Of course, those who get very adept will be able to use more with them in writing description and things like that."

So the jubilant Nouns and Verbs began to pile their shopping bags tight with the new Prepositions. Suddenly there was a sharp cry; one of the Nouns had reached into a tall hamper, but instead of coming up with the handful small words he had expected, he had a handful of <u>different</u> words. He pulled out the little bundle they formed, separated them, and read in amazement, "*in accordance with*." Mr. Case hurried to explain.

"We call these Phrasal Prepositions. They work just like the little ones. You will find others in these especially tall hampers back here in the corner."

When the Nouns and Verbs were ready to leave, Mr. Case interrupted them with a warning.

"Remember," he said, "every Preposition has to have an Object, and no word in the Prepositional Phrase can get out of the Phrase and do anything on his own. Also, some of them, alone, with no Object, will turn into Adverbs before you know it," he smiled. "Be careful!"

The Nouns and Verbs cried and shouted and waved good-bye as they again went pushing and shoving in their customary way as they hurried home.

As they were discussing their bouncy salesman, Mr. Case, someone suddenly remembered he had mentioned another member of his family, the Possessive Case.

"But he didn't tell us anything about that branch," the Noun muttered.

"That's all right," answered his carefree friend. "We won't be needing it obviously. I'd forget it." And they did, but soon they were wondering about something more important, <u>where</u> to put the Prepositions.

It was not long before they had all agreed this purchase called for <u>another</u> closet to be built though this one had to be different; it needed to divided into rows and rows of pigeonholes so everybody would have an even shot at choosing Prepositions. When it was done, they all had a great time trying various combinations.

Some Cousins Move In

The new Prepositions kept both the Nouns and Verbs busy and happy for quite a while, but eventually they began to feel the same old malaise; they felt the need to have something new, and soon the agitation to visit the G. and P. Grammar Store began once more.

"We could go back to see Mr. Case and ask him to explain the Possessive Case," suggested one Noun.

The Verbs really were not very interested; after all, Mr. Case had indicated his family had very little to do with Verbs -- - but it <u>was</u> something different to do so they trotted along with the Nouns. (The Verbs wouldn't admit it, but they really could do very little without the Nouns.)

Mr. Case was still on his lunch break when they reached the Store so they browsed around the First Floor. They found a book section that displayed dozens of Dictionaries, a table loaded with one Thesaurus after another, and one whole wall of shelves filled with different kinds of Grammar Books and Handbooks. They flipped mindlessly through the books, not understanding much of what they read. Just then Mr. Case came hurrying up to them. "They told me you people were waiting for me," said Case. "What can I do for you?"

When told they wanted to find out about Possessive Case, his face lit up. "Of course! Come with me!"

Case led the way to a large empty room where he began:

"Like the Objectives, they are not used as subjects of Verbs, but the Possessives are among the nicest members of our Case family," he said proudly, "although sadly, they are not always understood. All they really ever do is show possession. Nevertheless, people sometimes get mixed up because they do not all wear the same hats -- or rather," Case thought a minute, "they do not all wear them in exactly the same way."

"What do you mean 'wear hats . . . but not in the same way'?" asked one inquisitive little Noun.

"Well, in the first place, remember I am only talking about Nouns," replied Case, "and the difference is mainly between Singular and Plural Nouns. The Singular Possessives wear an Apostrophe s. So do the Plural Nouns --- if they don't end in *s*. If they end in *s*, they just add the Apostrophe, most of the time. Simple, right?" The group nodded vigorously, but then some of the Nouns slowed down and looked wistful.

"Maybe you can help us," one of them ventured. "Some of us end in *s* or *es*, and we aren't always sure how our Plurals are supposed to be spelled."

"Yes, I'll be glad to, but later," he answered. "Just remember, only numbers and letters ever use an apostrophe in a plural! There are so many exceptions to the rules that there can be a problem, and some people think it is easier to look each problem up in the dictionary and learn to spell it individually. At present, just try to absorb the general rules, why don't you?"

"However, even in these rules, there is one small loophole," he added. "If you are Singular, if you end in *s* and the next word in the Sentence begins with *s*, you add only the Apostrophe. This is to keep people speaking your Sentence from sounding like hissing snakes." Case laughed uproariously at his own joke.

The Noun and Verb families laughed obediently, even if they didn't think he was quite as good a comedian as Case felt he was. However, an irrepressible little Verb spoke up,

"All that was just for the Nouns," he said impatiently; "we wish you'd tell us something that has to do with us!"

Case looked thoughtful, then he said, "Maybe it is time for you to meet your cousins, the Verbals. You've heard of them and you will all enjoy really knowing them, I'm sure!"

The Verbs came to life with a rush. Meeting the cousins? What fun!!

"Tell us," they begged.

"No," Case shook his head, "I do not think I am the one to introduce you. Why don't you get on the Elevators --- The escalators do not go past Third --- and go on up to the Fourth Floor. There is a very nice old man up there named Mr. Verbal who will tell you much more about the whole family. We just had lunch together so I am sure he is in today."

"You Nouns will enjoy visiting him, too," Case continued. "Some of the Verbals are really your distant cousins, also." The two families lost no time dashing over to the bank of Elevators in the rear of the store and crowding in. However, no matter how

they tried, they could not all get in at one time and some had to wait for the return trip. As they moved about impatiently, the leftbehinds looked around them. The Grammar Store was much larger than they had first realized; they saw several new departments here in the back that they had not seen before. There was a kind of nook back on the right that really looked interesting with a big sign hanging down from the entrance that read "Pronouns." What were these, they wondered. Some of them wanted to go investigate, but the bossy members of the group protested.

"No, you can't now. We'll miss the chance to meet the Verbals."

Just then the Elevators returned, so temporarily forgetting about Pronouns, the group rose to the Fourth Floor.

The Fourth Floor was smaller and neater than any part of the Grammar Store they had visited yet. One corner was piled high with "*ings*" while across from it was another with "*ed's*" and another with a pile of "*n's*"; another corner was simply filled with piles of "*to's*."

There were also two tables in the center. A sign on one said "Objects" and on the other "Complements." Objects and Complements, they thought they already understood, but the mountain of "*ing's*" <u>really</u> surprised them --- and what were the piles of "*ed's*" and "*n's*" for? Right in front of the Elevators were those who had taken the first trip gathered about a small

white-haired old man, who was obviously Mr. Verbal since he was the only person there.

"Welcome," he greeted the newcomers. "I have been wondering when all of you people would come up to see me. We have a large number of other members of your Verb family up here, and I would have expected you to want to meet them as soon as possible."

As he chided them gently, some of the Verbs had the grace to look somewhat shamefaced at the rebuke, but the more boisterous ones were not fazed.

"Well, we're ready now," they said, almost jumping up and down.

Mr. Verbal smiled tolerently; he already knew about the nature of Verbs.

"Let me tell you something more about them before you meet them," he said.

"There are only three members of the Verbal family, and they are alike in one main respect: They all came from Verbs."

"We already knew <u>that</u>," murmured one irreverent Verb in the outer edges of the circle to his friend who shushed him quickly.

"However, they are different in two major ways: How they are made and what they can do," Mr. Verbal continued. "Their names are Participle, Gerund, and Infinitive." Sensing the restlessness in the group, the old man pointed to the stack of "*ing's*" in the corner, and told the Verbs each to get one and to hold it up against himself.

"Now, look at one another," he commanded. The Verbs suddenly realized they looked a lot different. For one thing, they were now longer words: *talk* held his "*ing*" straight by his side and became "*talking*"; *walk* became "*walking*"; *paint* became "*painting*," but when *Drive* held his up, his "*ing*" didn't fit!

"What am I doing wrong?" he cried.

Mr. Verbal smiled and said quietly,

"Why don't you try dropping that *'e'*?" he suggested. (*Drive* complied and smiled delightedly.) Then turning to the others, Mr. Verbal said,

"Those others of you who have troubles, try the same thing, drop your "*e*" then add your "*ing*." Now, you are Participles --- Present Participles, that is," Mr. Verbal corrected himself. "Now you can act like Adjectives! Step over by a Noun, and you will see."

They realized they had each turned into a kind of Adjective, but more a kind of Super Adjective, they felt, because they had been Verbs and that gave them more --- umph! They were very pleased.

Mr. Verbal then gave them some different instructions. "Now, walk away from your Nouns." he said, "and go over and stand by a Verb. Some of the "*Be*" family would work well for this example."

The new Present Participles quickly did as he instructed them. As they saw the results, they were open-mouthed in surprise. *Walking* had gone over to "*is*," *driving* was standing by

"*was*," *painting* was standing by "*has been*," and almost everyone realized all at once!

"Now we're acting like Nouns --- Subjects!" they cried.

"No," corrected Mr. Verbal, "you are now Gerunds!"

"But we haven't changed," they protested, all of them still clutching their "*ings*."

"Yes, you have," answered Mr.. Verbal, "While you still have the Present Participle shape --- " (They all nodded.), " --- when you behave like Adjectives, you are called Participles (though I, personally, think it would be better if we used a different word for this job, Dr. Grammarian doesn't seem to). When you act like Nouns," he continued, "you are called Gerunds! Everybody understand?"

They nodded.

"There is one thing more you need to know about Gerunds. Each of the Verbals has two sides, the Verb side and the Verbal side," he continued, "with which it acts as another part of speech. On the Verb side it can do everything a Verb can do except be a Verb. Theoretically, Participles can modify Nouns, which could be called their Subjects --- anywhere, but in actual practice they usually modify those which are in the Nominative Case, being used as Subjects. However, Gerunds are different. Anywhere they go, they alone have the Possessive Case as a Subject! And, to continue this train of thought, the Infinitives, which are usually found in the Predicate where the Objective Case is also found, most often use the Objective Case

as a Subject. Do you see? Of course, there are a couple of minor exceptions," he added hastily, "but they are used seldom."

As they nodded -- a little more slowly, Mr. Verbal rubbed his hands together in a pleased fashion.

"Now, you have to realize there is also a Past Participle. All you Verbs have been using it for your Perfect Tenses, you know. You see those piles of "*ed's*" and "*n's*" on the other side of the room? (They all nodded again.) Well, if you need any of them, help yourselves. If some of you have broken or split ends on your Past Participles, there are ample substitutes. The point is, however, you can also use Past Participles as Adjectives --- like the Present Participles --- but the Past Participles cannot be Gerunds without helpers!"

The group of Nouns and Verbs looked thoughtful then nodded again.

"Well, then," Mr. Verbal continued, "let us talk about those little devils, the Infinitives." (The Verbs looked at one another "--- little devils?")

As he talked on, the families came to realize that Mr. Verbal was really speaking fondly of the Infinitives. It was evident that he considered them cute, competent, and very useful.

"If you Verbs will step over to the right corner and each pick up a "*to*," you will begin to understand Infinitives right away. Here, hold them on your right," he cautioned. They began to look at one another and found Mr. Verbal was correct. They saw at once what had happened. When "*go*" picked up his "*to*," he

became "*to go*," an Infinitive; "*study*" became "*to study*," "*bring*" had become "*to bring*," and so through the whole group. This was easy, they thought.

"Now that you are Infinitives," continued Mr. Verbal," you need to know what you can do. Like your brothers, the Participles and the Gerunds, you also can act like Adjectives and Nouns, and you can also act like Adverbs! In addition, you Verbs, will find you can even use them in building fancy Verb forms that you will eventually get together and work out. Now, do you see why I called them 'little devils'?" he asked with a twinkle in his eye. "They are into everything!"

"Mr. Verbal," asked one self-centered little Noun who was tired of hearing so much talk about Verbs, "What are these tables of Objects and Complements doing up here on Fourth? I thought those were Noun jobs."

"You are quite right, my boy," Mr. Verbal smiled. "They were put here only for convenience --- to help me make the point that although the Verbals spend their lives acting like other parts of speech they do come from Verbs, and on the Verb side of the family, they can do anything the Verbs they come from can do, such as take Objects of any kind, Complements of any kind, or Nothing, depending upon whether their parent Verbs were Transitive or Intransitive."

"All the Verbals can have Tense, too," he said, "just like you Verbs do. You are familiar with Tense, are you not?" he

asked, noting he had lost some of the rapt attention he had received earlier.

"We-l-l-l," some of them answered, "we know all of our Principal Parts --- but some of us get mixed up on the helpers (because part of <u>them</u> can be full scale Verbs, too!). Can you straighten us out?"

Mr. Verbal glanced at the big pocket watch he carried. "It is a little late to go into that today," he said, "and I think Mr. Usage would be a better instructor on Tense. It is rather an artificial thing, you know, with more rules than logic. Why not go home now and talk about the Verbals. . . ?"

"And the Cases, too," chimed in a couple of Nouns.

"And come back tomorrow," Mr. Verbal continued, "when you are bright and enthusiastic again, to learn all about Tense. I'll make an appointment for you."

The group suddenly realized he was right; they <u>were</u> rather run down. They <u>had</u> learned a lot of new things today! So they took his advice and trooped over to the door just as the downstairs clerks were slipping dust covers in front of the books and beginning to switch off the lights.

As they left the elevators, some of the Nouns who had been in the last loads up looked over their shoulders into the Pronoun room.

"Let's be sure to go in and find out about those words tomorrow, too."

"If we have time," agreed another.

By the time they all got back home, the Nouns and Verbs were really worn out so they called it a day.

II

Mr. Usage Lays Down the Law

The next morning, bright and early, the Nouns and Verbs made themselves as neat as possible in order to put their best feet forward when they talked to Mr. Usage. This was an occasion!

When they arrived at the Store, they were met by an expensively dressed gray-haired man, who bowed politely, and asked, "You are the Nouns and Verbs Mr. Verbal spoke of, who have come to keep your appointment with Mr. Usage? Permit me to welcome you this morning. If you will follow me, please."

The gray-haired gentleman, whose name tag read "Mr. Rhetoric," led them around the corner from the bank of Elevators to a Golden Door which could be unlocked with a small key. It had taken several elevators to haul them all yesterday and the Elevator they found behind the Golden Door did not look as large as any one of those, but, miraculously, there was room for everyone! Mr. Rhetoric entered, also, and using a special device he took from his pocket, pushed a button on the inside of the Door. Almost immediately it opened again and to their amazement, they found that the mysterious Elevator had deposited them on what looked like the top floor of the building. There were windows and shelves all round the large room which was pretty and airy --- but not really very orderly. There was a huge desk in the center, behind which was a man whose tie was askew and hair uncombed.

Mr. Usage, for it was indeed he, looked up as the large group of Nouns and Verbs entered, and began hastily stuffing his untidy shirt into his pants.

"Oh, I'm glad to see you, my friends. How may I help you?"

The Nouns could not think of anything to say, but the Verbs always were ready with an answer, especially when it concerned them.

"We would like you to explain Tense to us," they exclaimed. "We know our Three Principal Parts ("Well, most of them," muttered *Lay* to *Lie*[*], who nodded ruefully. They were overheard by *Sit* and *Sat*[*] who raised their eyebrows in agreement.), but where do we go from there? What really is Tense?"

"Tense means time," Mr. Usage explained. "It is the quickest and easiest way you Verbs can put time into your sentences; it helps make you people extra valuable."

The Verbs began to grin from ear to ear. They'd always known they were special.

"To begin with," said Mr. Usage, "there are six tenses. You've already been using the simple tenses: the Present, the Past, and the Future. There are only 3 others, and they really are just as easy. You just add the word Perfect to each of them,

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[*] *Lie, lay lain; lay, laid, laid; sit, sat, sat; set, set, set.*

and you have the Present Perfect, the Past Perfect, and the Future Perfect. They are the Tenses that let you be more precise. The only trick to keeping them separate is learning their Helpers, because you use your Third Principal Part for all the Perfect Tenses!

The verbs nodded knowingly: This wasn't going to be too hard. Only 3 more Tenses, the Perfects, and they all used their Third Principal Parts.

"What are the Helpers?" they asked eagerly.

"Listen carefully," Mr. Usage cautioned. "Do not get them mixed up! The Helper in the Present Perfect Tense is *Have* (except in Third Person Singular, which uses *Has*). The Past Perfect helper is *Had* in all persons. Just as the Future used *Shall* and *Will*, the Future Perfect helper uses *Shall Have* in the First Person, both singular and plural, and *Will Have* for all the rest. See? You must memorize this." Mr. Usage nervously ran his fingers through his hair, which did not improve the effect.

"You mean, that is all there is to it?" asked one Verb.

"No," smiled Mr. Usage, "the real problem is to know when to use them. Some people have trouble catching onto that."

"Tell us, tell us," the Verbs begged.

"Well, you have to remember that all three Perfect Tenses are Past Tenses; that is, the actions they describe all start before the time you are speaking or writing of. Afterwards, they show their differences. The Present Perfect starts in the Past and then comes forward and covers the Present, too. When you use

it, you are using the Past Tense and the Present all at the same time! If I say, *'I have eaten,'* I started before you came up and just finished.

"The Past Perfect Tense stays in the Past. It begins in the Past and ends before some other time in the Past that you usually name in your sentence with an Adverb or a Prepositional Phrase. It is the favorite tense of a lot of people because there are no changes to learn! For example: with, "*I had eaten before you called*," you get quite a different message than given with Present Perfect!

"The third one, the Future Perfect Tense," he continued, "really is not used very much, but when you need it, it is handy. With it, you imagine you are at some time in the Future, then you look back to sometime before <u>that</u>. For example, suppose it is Thanksgiving; look ahead and pretend it is Christmas and think of what you *will have accomplished* by then. You could say, *'I shall have bought all my gifts by Christmas.'* Do all of you Verbs understand?"

They nodded enthusiastically. "That's all there is to Tense?" they asked.

"Well, yes," Mr. Usage answered slowly, "except that there <u>is</u> more I could tell you about Verbs. You can do more than just change Tense, you know." He peered at them quizzically over the tops of his narrow magnifying glasses.

"It is like this," he continued, "all I've told you applies to a straight <u>Conjugation</u>. (That is what it is called when we

run through all the forms <u>available</u> in all six tenses.) But do you remember what Mr. Verbal told you about adding *'ing'* to your First Principal Part?"

"Yes, that's when we get to be Participles and act as Adjectives," the Verbs answered.

"And Gerunds so you can act like us," chimed in the hitherto silent Nouns.

"Indeed so," smiled Mr. Usage. "Those *'ing'* Verbals -- the Present Participles and Gerunds can actually <u>be</u> Verbs if you will give <u>them</u> a helper. Is my friend *BE* here today?"

A slender little Verb stepped forward.

"*'Be,'* do you have all the members of your Conjugation here with you today?"

"Yes, sir," *Be* answered politely.

"Then let us arrange them in rows, according to their tenses and persons," said Mr. Usage in a very business-like voice.

The Verbs pushed and shoved and finally gathered in a clump before their organizer who proceeded to line them up in exact rows.

Present		*Past*		*Future*	
I am,	*we are*	*I was,*	*we were*	*I shall be,*	*we shall be*
you are,	*you are*	*you were,*	*you were*	*you will be,*	*you will be*
he is,	*they are*	*he was,*	*they were*	*he will be,*	*they will be*

Present Perfect		*Past Perfect*	
I have been,	*we have been*	*I had been,*	*we had been*
you have been,	*you have been*	*you had been,*	*you had been*
he has been,	*they have been*	*he had been,*	*they had been*

Future Perfect	
I shall have been,	*we shall have been*
you will have been,	*you will have been*
he will have been,	*they will have been*

Once the unruly Verbs were lined up, Mr. Usage heaved a sigh of relief before he turned to all the other Verbs:

"Now," he said, "add your *'ing'* Verbal forms to any of these *Be* words. The *Be* verbs are now your Helpers. Not only are they hard-working Linking Verbs all by themselves, they will act as wooden legs for your one-legged Present Participles so they, too, can become full Verbs. Not only will they become Verbs, they will be very special Verbs that show 'continuous action.' This is something that cannot be handled any other way. It is very important!"

"You, over there, *Study*. Take your ending and go stand on the other side of *'I am'*!"

When the Verbs all saw the resulting "*I am studying*," they caught on at once! They were quite impressed. Even the Nouns looked thoughtful at the possibilities this opened in forming Sentences.

"Now, wait," Mr. Usage warned them, "there is more!"

"More?" they gasped.

"Yes, indeed," he laughed. "Now forget about your Present Participles just for a moment. You *'Be'* verbs keep standing there in order," he admonished them as they started to move apart, "no shifting around. I am going to talk to only a part of you Verbs now. You, Transitives, did you ever stop to think how you form those Passive Voice Verbs you like to talk about having? Have you ever thought exactly what has to work together before you <u>have</u> a Verb in the Passive Voice?"

Much more meekly than usual, the Transitive Verbs hung their heads abashed. They knew they had done a lot of bragging and they realized they had no idea where they could find their Passive Verbs.

Mr. Usage smiled encouragement at them. "Just think about your Third Principal Parts -- your Past Participles. They also have, as Verbals, only one leg, but if you give them Helpers . . .," he said suggestively as he looked at the impassive *Be* verbs.

"These are your Helper Verbs, also; add these to your Past Participles and you will have --- the Passive Voice!" As an afterthought, he tossed off another detail as he turned back to his desk:

"In addition, if you should want a Transitive Verb to be not only Passive but also Progressive (showing Continuous Action) just stick the word *being* in, right before the Past Participle itself. It is really very simple --- Just like putting together the layers in a Submarine Sandwich."

The Verbs were in awe. This was so much more information than they had anticipated receiving when they had asked to be informed about Tense! These formulas would take much thought, and they suddenly realized Mr. Usage's casual mention of a Submarine Sandwich had struck a chord --- they were hungry! The Nouns and Verbs thanked Mr. Usage effusively and headed for home as rapidly as possible. This time the whole trip back passed in relative silence as each thought about the new possibilities.

The Verbs had much to think about. Mr. Usage had thrown a lot at them! They had found that some of their characteristics they had bragged about were far more complicated than they had dreamed. And then there were the Verbals. There was also more to them than they had known. Now that they knew all about Verbals, the Verbs were of two minds about them.

The Verbals -- the Participle, the Gerund, and the Infinitive -- had always been a special problem for the ruling Verbs. On one hand, a few of the Verbs almost felt like apologizing to them because the Verbals could not be full-fledged Verbs while, on the other hand, some Verbs felt proud of their cousins, calling them the most versatile members of the family.

"The only way they can be Verbs is if they are given Helper Verbs," grumbled some of the family, "and the Infinitives, for example, need even more than that! People are always mixing them up and trying to use them instead of us in some of their sentences."

"Nonsense," another Verb exploded. "The Gerunds and the Infinitives are the only ones of us who can invade the Subjects where the Nouns think they are so great. The Infinitives can modify Nouns and both of them can even pretend to be Nouns. It's the only way we have of cutting those uppity Nouns down to size!"

"Besides," chimed in another, "we couldn't have as many tenses and forms if it weren't for the Participles!"

So the Verbs were at it again, fussing and bickering as usual.

The Versatile Substitutes

It took several days for the Verbs to recover from their visit with Mr. Usage. They had been impressed beyond anything they had anticipated. Even the Nouns admitted they, too, had been impressed -- but they recovered sooner. After all he had not been talking about <u>them</u>! And eventually, of course, they remembered Pronouns.

Pronouns -- those mysterious things in that narrow back section by the Elevators in the G. and P. Grammar Store -- Pronouns -- that they had intended to visit the other day after their visit with Mr. Usage, but had been too overwhelmed to do -- Pronouns were next on the agenda.

"Let's go down to learn about Pronouns," some of the Nouns proposed, "even if most of the Verbs don't want to go."

The group of Nouns, after a certain amount of delay and fussing, finally found themselves back at the G. and P. Grammar Store. They were very familiar with the entrance now so they made their way straight to the Pronoun section.

As they walked under the Pronoun sign, they were surprised to find clumps of words hanging from the walls and ceiling, somewhat like layers of clothes in the typical mall shop. While they stared around, a tall thin girl hurried up to them. She was dressed entirely in a shiny gray pant suit that seemed to reflect all their faces. It was a little disconcerting at first.

"Hello," the tall lady smiled, "I'm sorry I have mislaid my name tag. I am Samantha Substitutinous -- just call me 'Suby.' What may I show you in Pronouns?"

"Everything," stammered a Noun, "that is, we want to know <u>everything</u>!"

"Very well," Suby said, "I will be <u>glad</u> to take care of you! There is quite a bit to show you."

"We have a number of different kinds of Pronouns, but the main thing most of them do is substitute. That's why I asked to work in this department," she explained. "With my name, it just seemed I belonged here!"

"But what do they substitute <u>for</u>?" asked the puzzled Nouns.

"Why, for <u>you</u>," replied Suby, "didn't I say that? You have so MUCH to do. Nearly every Verb has to have one of you as a subject, and most want you to be Objects or Complements. Then there are the Prepositions who need you for Objects, and then the Verbals --- they need you, too, to fill them out! You Nouns are the most overworked words I know. Now, Pronouns can really help! They can cut your workload by half or <u>more</u>. You should have found out about Pronouns first off!" Suby threw her hands wide in her enthusiasm. It was obvious she really <u>liked</u> Pronouns!

The Nouns crowded up closer.

"Tell us," they begged, "how can Pronouns help <u>us</u>?"

"Well," she smiled, " take the word itself: Pro - noun <u>means</u> 'for a noun.' This means once a Noun has been used, further references in the next sentence or the next several

sentences can use Pronouns instead. This way you don't keep working in every sentence. As long as each Pronoun agrees with its Antecedent, everything is fine!"

"What is an Antecedent?" asked one polite little Noun, voicing the question they all had. Suby was going so fast---!

"Why, you are," replied Suby. "When a Pronoun goes into a sentence to take your place, you are its Antecedent. It is you who decide if the Pronoun that goes in your place is Singular or Plural, the Person it is, -- and in some cases what Gender that Pronoun is (when there is a choice!). Of course, you do not have anything to do with its Case; its use does that," she added quickly.

"Oh-h-h," her audience murmured. They did wish she would not talk so fast!

"Now," she continued, "we should probably talk about the different kinds of Pronouns." The Nouns exchanged glances, "-- different kinds?"

"The first are the Personal Pronouns. They come in Singular and Plural, of course, and in the three different Persons. Has anyone explained Persons to you?" she broke off to ask.

They shook their heads so she quickly interposed an explanation.

"Verbs, in particular, have to watch for them. The First Person is the person speaking; the Second is the person spoken to; and the Third Person is the one spoken of. All you Nouns are automatically Third Person," Suby added quickly. "Your friends,

the Verbs also use Person when they are conjugated, but nobody else has as much to do with Person."

Some of the Nouns looked guilty. Maybe they should have insisted on the Verbs coming, too, they thought.

"Getting back to the Personal Pronouns," Suby continued, "like you, they have Case but, unlike you, they change words, most of the time, to indicate which Case. The easiest way to handle them is to learn 'The Table of Personal Pronouns'.* I'll give you each a copy so you'll know which Personal Pronouns are available at any time. Of course, you could get ahead faster if you memorized them. . . ." she rolled her big blue eyes at them suggestively. "Now, if you'll all follow me over here to the other side of the room, we'll talk about some other Pronouns."

The Nouns trooped after her, eager to learn more about their new-found worksavers.

"Over this shelf," Suby pointed out, "hang the Demonstrative Pronouns. There are only a few of them: *this* to refer to things close to you, and here is its plural, *these*; *that* is for things

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*Table of Personal Pronouns

	Singular	Plural
1st Person	I, my, mine, me	we, our, ours, us
2nd Person	you, your, yours	you, your, yours
3rd Person	he, his, him, she, her, hers, it, its, it	they, their, theirs, them

farther away and by it is hanging its plural, *those*. All they do is point out -- which really is a very convenient function."

Suby started to move on then suddenly turned and added, "There is something else I could tell you about these Demonstrative Pronouns. They are willing to change hats right before your eyes. If instead of their becoming a substitute for you, if some of you Nouns want to stay in the sentence, they will move to your right to modify you and turn into Demonstrative Adjectives! They will still point, but then they will do it to you in modifying you. Not only that, but one of them -- *that* -- you will run into again when we talk about some other Pronouns. He's a busy little fellow!"

The Nouns smiled with satisfaction as they followed Suby on. These Demonstrative Pronouns struck them as the most simple thing they had bumped into yet!

"Here in this section," their guide began again, "are the Pronouns we use to ask questions. They are really handy! We use them in Direct and Indirect Questions. On these shelves you find such words as *who*, *which*, *what*, ..."

"Do they have Antecedents, too?" asked a somewhat pompous Noun.

"That's a very good question," Suby answered, "but the answer needs some thinking about. Their Antecedents are in the answers to the questions they ask, so no one has many problems with them." (The Nouns raised their eyebrows at one another.)

Glancing at her watch, Suby moved on down to the longest set of shelves and hangers.

"Now, here," she pointed to a larger group hanging against the wall, "are a large group of Pronouns that DON'T have Antecedents. They are self-contained and can be their own Antecedents, I guess we could say," Suby laughed. "They are called Indefinite Pronouns and include *anybody*, *everyone*, *someone*, *each*, etc. When they are used, the trick is to remember that they are each singular and need singular Verbs."

"Now, over here we have the "Self" Pronouns -- *myself*, *ourselves*, *yourselves*, *himself*, *herself*, *itself*, and *themselves*. (That's all there are," Suby interrupted herself to say. "Even though you may someday have someone try to say hisself or theirself, those words just don't exist!) These "Self" Pronouns are used in two different ways: Reflexive and Intensive. The Intensive Pronoun is placed right after the noun it "intensifies," and the effect is somewhat like underscoring it. The Reflexive does the same thing but from farther away, over in the Predicate, after the Verb. With them the trick is to be sure their Antecedent is the Subject. The "Self" Pronouns, of course, can never be subjects!"

Suby moved on around the room.

"The next group of Pronouns are probably the most complicated," she said. "They are named the Relative Pronouns because this is what they do, relate the Clauses they introduce

to their Antecedents." Seeing their puzzled expressions, she guessed at once the reason.

"Nobody has told you about Clauses?" she guessed.

"No, we know about Sentences and Phrases, but -- What <u>are</u> Clauses?" the puzzled Nouns asked.

"Clauses are like sentences; they have Subjects and Predicates, but those whose first word is a Relative Pronoun are called Adjective Clauses because the <u>Clauses</u> then act like Adjectives, modifying the <u>Antecedents</u> of their Relative Pronouns. This is the connection which is 'related'," Suby answered.

Having explained Clauses, at least to her <u>own</u> satisfaction, Suby returned to the matter of Relative Pronouns for the bemused Nouns.

"Some of the words that can be Relative Pronouns," she continued, "are *who*, *whose*, and *whom*, which are in the Nominative, Possessive, and Objective Cases, respectively, and should be used only with Nouns referring to <u>people</u> as Antecedents; *which* should be used with <u>things</u> as Antecedents, and *that* used to refer to either one but, particularly, to you Abstract Nouns.

"You Nouns will remember," she added quickly, "*that* may be used as a Demonstrative Pronoun or a Demonstrative Adjective, and that *who*, *whose*, *whom*, and *which* can also be Interrogative Pronouns, used to ask questions. However, there need to be no confusion among <u>these</u> uses for only the Relative Pronouns can

introduce Adjective Clauses and are, therefore, only found in Complex Sentences."

Suby sudenly looked more thoughful and momentarily interrupted what she was saying to interpolate,

"There is something else with which a lot of people have an amazing amount of trouble so I suppose it should be mentioned especially."

The Nouns looked questioningly at her.

"I'm talking about *who* and *whom*," she said. "Some people are even afraid to try to use those two pronouns because of the mixups with them."

"Tell us how to know the difference," some of the Nouns cried.

"If you will just think, you'll know," said Suby. "*Who* is used as a Subject, that is in places where *he* or *she* would be used. *Whom*, on the other hand, is used as an Object -- where *him* or *her* would be appropriate. That is all there is to it!"

The Nouns looked at each other and swallowed rather hard. All this about Pronouns was more than they had expected, and it had not been simple to follow. They were getting tired and longed to go home though they hated to admit it.

Despite her enthusiasm for her subject, Suby saw their fatigue and had sympathy for them. She knew she had given them a lot to think about. Too much?

"Perhaps with so much material to ponder," she said tactfully, "you would like to go back home and think about

Pronouns and their uses. You could come back another day. Perhaps you would like to talk to someone else about Clauses; there <u>are</u> other kinds than Adjective, you know!"

The Nouns brightened considerably at her words and lost no time in taking her up on them. My, what a lot they had to tell the Verbs, they thought. They and their Verbals! Wait til the Verbs heard about all the kinds of <u>Pronouns</u>!!

Clauses and All That . . . .

Two or three days later a Noun spoke musingly, "You know, I've been thinking about Relative Pronouns and what these Adjective Clauses are all about . . . ."

By this time the Verbs had heard the Nouns discoursing upon the virtues of Pronouns until it was running out of their ears, and though they had to admit they could see some advantage to these new words, they had finally gotten so tired of listening to the Nouns that by twos and threes, the Verbs had sneaked off and gone fishing. Without them, the house had been MUCH quieter, and most of the Nouns had calmed down and had even started thinking about everything they had been learning. When the Nouns started wondering aloud about Adjective Clauses, it was not long until -- with one thing and another -- they began to wonder about other kinds of Clauses. Somebody brought up Phrases, Prepositional Phrases, and the fact that they, too, were possible to be used as Adjectives, Adverbs -- and even as Nouns. What if Clauses could do this also? And what was that she had said about Complex Sentences? Complex Sentences? They did not know there was more than one kind of Sentence -- the kind they had all worked together in . . . .

While they wandered about, muttering about possibilities, the Verbs suddenly returned with baskets of fish! They were in a much better humor and everyone cooperated in cooking their large catch and having a party. After dinner when everyone was feeling full and mellow, someone diplomatically brought up Clauses -- and

different kinds of Sentences, and the whole group vowed to go together once more to the G. and P. Grammar Store on the morrow and find someone to answer their questions. After making this momentous group decision, they went to bed.

The next day, bright and early, the eager Nouns and Verbs set out for the big, bright Grammar Store. This time they sought out Mr. Index again. He seemed to know where everything was so he should be able to tell them with whom to talk about Clauses and Sentences.

Mr. Index was once again standing right by the front door, and in answer to their question, he said,

"Oh, of course, I think you should talk to Dr. Grammarian about this overall question you have. You need to go to the back of the Store and take the same Elevator you took to see Mr. Usage. It is ready for use, but this time, when you get inside the Elevator, you can press the golden "T" button. That will take you up to the Grammar Tower to Dr. Grammarian's office, which is up high where he can overlook all the operations."

As they pushed and shoved toward the back, some of them on the fringes delayed to look at what was piled up upon a new center table. A Verb picked up a peculiarly carved little block. As he was staring at it and turning it up and down, a Noun standing by him reached down and grabbed up a dot.

"Why, there are some of our <u>periods</u>," he exclaimed. Both words glanced up at the red sign floating over the table which they had ignored at first.

"Punctuation Available; Periods, Commas, Semicolons, and Many Others," it said.

A second Verb joined them in picking up pieces of Punctuation just as a little lady dressed in a long, old-fashioned style, wearing her hair in a bun on top of her head, bustled up and rapped their fingers, hard.

"Now, that's enough of that," she spluttered. "You need to know how to use Punctuation before you even touch it! It is you unknowing ones who toss Commas and Periods and Semicolons into sentences where they do not belong -- as well as leave them out where they are needed -- who cause much of the confusion in the world. Why, do you even care where they are supposed to go and not go?!"

The poor little Nouns and Verbs were aghast and struck speechless at her attack; they had just been looking at the items on the table.

"No? I thought not! Well, you'd better just trot on with your friends. Until Dr. Grammarian straightens you out," she ordered, "you keep your hands off of our Punctuation Tables!"

The Words backed away from her attack then turned and fled to the Elevator, arriving just in time to squeeze in before the door closed. The Elevator took them a little farther before the doors opened upon a round, book-lined room that, although it did not seem large, it, like the Elevator, seemed to have plenty of room for them all. The room was very neatly arranged with a clean desk in the center at which sat Dr. Grammarian.

Dr. Grammarian was a tall, white-haired, very courtly gentleman, well-dressed in a black velvet jacket and grey pants. He looked like an old-time movie actor.

"Ah, yes, my friends," Dr. Grammarian said, with a faint smile. "How can I help you?"

"We - uh - uh want - " stammered a Noun in the front row.

His Verb friend picked up the ball for him.

"We want to find out all we can about Clauses and Sentences," he hurried to add.

"I have been reading reports on you people," Dr. Grammarian said thoughtfully. "You have been doing considerable research on the other parts of speech you've been working with. That is very good! In fact, Mr. Verbal was just telling me what close attention you Nouns and Verbs gave him. He was very pleased - yes, yes. Mr. Usage gave you a good report, also."

The group looked at one another, beaming at the compliment.

"Well, now," Dr. Grammarian put the tips of his fingers together in a small teepee and pursed his lips, "you may already know some of the things I am going to tell you, but it never hurts to hear something familiar when you are learning something new. Do you not agree?"

His fascinated audience nodded numbly. The surroundings and Dr. Grammarian himself were almost overpoweringly impressive.

"You know," Dr. Grammarian began, "that we can make a complete sentence with only a Noun in the Nominative Case and an

Intransitive Complete Verb such as 'Boys go.' Nothing could be simpler.

"Of course, it can also be decorated or augmented with whatever Adjectives, Adverbs, and Prepositional Phrases you wish. You can make the Subject compound or the Verb compound; the Verbals can also be involved with a Gerund used as the Subject or a Participle or an Infinitive as a modifier, and so on.

"An equally Simple Sentence may be constructed using an Intransitive Linking Verb, together with its Subjective Complement (John seems tired.) . . . . and there is also the Transitive Verb sentence with its Object or Objects (She drank milk.). These Sentences can naturally use Modifiers to any desired extent or substitute Verbals wherever desired as that is how the lowly Simple Sentence maintains its place in the world of writing."

Dr. Grammarian hardly stopped for a breath as his lecture flowed on to the next subject.

"Next comes the Compound Sentence. It is essentially the joining of two or more Simple Sentences. If this is done, the parts of the combined Sentence are now called Independent Clauses. That is to say, if the Coordinate Conjunction which joins them were eliminated, the Clauses could stand alone <u>independently</u>."

As he finished speaking, a large number of hands shot up. He nodded, somewhat imperiously, permission for them to speak.

"Please, sir," an unusually timid Verb spoke up, "what are Coordinate Conjunctions?"

"They are a small group of words that are used to join two grammatical structures of equal value -- Words, Phrases, or Clauses. There are only a few: *and, but, or, nor, for,* as well as the Corelatives: *both. . . and, neither. . . nor, either. . . or, and not only. . . but also.* If you have not acquired these yet, you had better pick them up on the First Floor as you leave. Any more questions?"

His attentive audience shook their heads as Dr. Grammarian once again took up his lecture.

"Grammatically, I have already told you all you need to know about the structure of the Compound Sentences, but you should also know such a Sentence should never be used unless there is a close relationship between parts, that they refer to things of equal value which <u>should</u> be combined," he explained. "I must tell you that Compound Sentences are often misused by beginning writers who combine Clauses which are not equal in meaning simply because they are too lazy to work out more complicated constructions. This is unfortunately a growing tendency.

"The major 'more complicated' structure is the Complex Sentence. I understand from Miss Substitutinous that she introduced you to some of the Complex Sentences when she told you of the possibilities presented by the Relative Pronouns and their Adjective Clauses."

The Nouns looked especially happy; he had finally come to the part that had aroused their curiosity. They smiled happily at one another as Dr. Grammarian paused to take a drink of water then rose to his feet and began to pace slowly behind his desk as he continued,

"The whole point of the Complex Sentence is that very few thoughts are equal in importance; one is usually the reason for the other or the result of the other. For this reason, instead of using two Independent Clauses, one of them - the least important - should be subordinated -- Yes?" Dr. Grammarian interrupted himself as a number of hands again shot into the air.

"We don't know what 'subordinated' means," the group said almost in unison.

Dr. Grammarian sighed, "Of course. I should have realized that. Subordinated means one Clause (or anything) is caused to be less important than another. Understand? Now, how is this done? It is very easy. One simply takes a Subordinate Conjunction and puts it first in the Clause which is to be subordinated. If the Sentence begins with this Subordinate Clause, it must be separated, or set off, from the Independent (or Main) Clause with a Comma. The reason is that the type of Clause I am describing is used as an Adverb, and we cannot have an Adverb Clause seeming to modify the Subject." he laughed. "Now if we place this Adverb Clause <u>after</u> the Independent Clause, <u>no</u> Comma is <u>needed</u> because the Clause is as close to the Verb that it nearly always modifies as it is possible to be. Thus, we

have Adverb Clauses. Some of the words the Adverb Clauses begin with -- the Subordinate conjunctions that are their sign -- are *if, since, after, although, even though, as if, because, before, in order that, so that, when, where, while, . . .* You must be aware, however, that some of these words can also function as Prepositions. A versatile language, English!" he exclaimed.

"The Adjective Clauses, you have already met. They are usually placed as close as they can be to the Antecedent of the Relative Pronoun who introduces them.

Dr. Grammarian gazed out at the view a moment then continued.

"There are two kinds of Adjective Clauses, the Restrictive, (which needs no Commas to set it off) and the Non-Restrictive (which <u>is</u> set off by Commas). The Restrictive Clause is needed to identify the Antecedent, and the Non-Restrictive is not necessary, hence the commas."

Dr. Grammarian paused and frowned slightly as he added:

"There is another important detail to stress about these Relative Pronouns. The Pronoun *that* should never be used to refer to <u>people</u> where <u>*who*</u> will work just as well -- and you will notice *that* frequently introduces Restrictive Clauses, also. You have to be careful never to overwork the word *that*. People will think you have a weak vocabulary if you do!"

Dr. Grammarian turned away from the group as he sneezed and walked over to the window behind his desk, blowing his nose vigorously. At this a couple of light-minded little Verbs

started to titter over at the side. They were promptly shushed by the more mature ones standing nearby, *think, listen,* and *meditate,* who were taking the lecture very seriously. Dr. Grammarian turned back with a slight smile.

"Please excuse me, my friends, it is this Goldenrod . . . Even at this height---," he shook his head and smiled briefly. "Well, now -- let us get back to business. There is a third kind of Clause that is used in Complex Sentences. It is the Noun Clause."

There was a soft "Ah-h-h!" heard from the Nouns.

"Yes," said Dr. Grammarian, "yet another construction can be used as a substitute for you Nouns. They have a different aspect to them, too. While they are Subordinate Clauses, being Nouns, they cannot be left out of their Sentences; they are a part <u>themselves</u>, of the Independent Clauses, perhaps as the Subjects - or the Subjective Complements, or perhaps even as the Objects of Prepositions (which is a very strange construction we need not go into right now).

"Now, with this, shall we say, telescoping arrangement of the Clauses, there is no need for the use of Commas with the Noun Clauses. However, I might add that Noun Clauses provide another use for our popular little friend *that* with which most of them begin. Any questions?"

The Nouns were speechless, afraid to make any remarks Dr. Grammarian might consider foolish.

"In looking back over what you know about Clauses, Prepositional Phrases, and Infinitives (on occasion) you will see that all of them can be used as Nouns, Adjectives, and Adverbs. This multiple grouping has been a convenience for the grammar student. So, do any of you have any comments or questions about Clauses?"

Dr. Grammarian looked around searchingly. "No? Then let us take up the last type of Sentence, the Compound-Complex Sentence. If you know anything about basic mathematics, you will find this type of sentence easier to understand. For example, a Complex Sentence requires <u>one</u> Independent Clause and <u>one</u> Subordinate Clause; to make a Compound Sentence, there must be <u>two</u> Independent Clauses so -- all that is needed is to add a second Independent Clause to the Complex Sentence to produce this fourth type."

The Verbs were fascinated by the possibility of acquiring another opportunity to work in a Sentence.

"For obvious reasons," Dr. Grammarian continued, "there is becoming less and less need for the really prestigious Compound-Complex Sentence. Grammar teachers are even having problems getting their students to write complete, grammatical, Simple Sentences," he shook his head ruefully. "It is such a shame. All you Words have made it possible for people to communicate their thoughts, feelings, desires more precisely in greater detail than ever before and young people, who are <u>living</u> <u>longer</u> than ever before, protest that they have no <u>time</u> to learn to use

their native tongue fully and correctly. It is very sad," Dr. Grammarian sighed heavily.

The group of Nouns and Verbs found themselves sharing his feeling of sadness. Their visit with him had been much more than they had expected. In addition to the grammatical facts, he had given them an overview, a sense of maturity and even of responsibility to their Sentences and to their use. They literally did not know what to say.

Dr. Grammarian seemed to understand their feelings without any words being spoken, and he seemed to know that enough had happened for the present.

"My friends, I have enjoyed talking to you today, but I think we had better stop now. You now know most of the main components and their usages in the English Sentence. There are a number of little specialized things . . . ." at their questioning look, he interrupted himself to cite some examples. "Well, take *there* for an example. *There* is the best example of an Expletive, which is a word which can begin sentence, but can never be a Subject. . . except in this Sentence I have just spoken," he chuckled. Then there is the Nominative Absolute construction which uses a Noun (or a Pronoun, of course) in the Nominative Case and a modifying Participle in a kind of grammatical shorthand instead of a whole Clause . . . . As I said, there are a number of other small particles of grammatical knowledge -- but -- later. If you go home and find you have further questions, you can come back any time.

"Now, before you leave, be sure to stop downstairs to get the Conjunctions you need, both Coordinate and Subordinate. You will need some Punctuation, too -- Commas, Semicolons, and more Periods if you do not already have enough. You can come back for Punctuation talks, too, anytime you wish."

The Nouns and Verbs took turns shaking hands with Dr. Grammarian as they thanked him and bade him farewell. They felt almost as though they knew everything it was possible to learn -- - yet, someway, they knew there would always be more to find out . . . .

If you happen to wonder
what the G. and P. in the name of the Grammar Store stood for,
it is
"the Good and Proper Grammar Store."